

architecture institutions and change

Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand Vol. 32

Edited by Paul Hogben and Judith O'Callaghan

Published in Sydney, Australia, by SAHANZ, 2015
ISBN: 978 0 646 94298 8

The bibliographic citation for this paper is:

Laidlaw, Reagan, and Christoph Schnoor. "Biculturalism in New Zealand Correctional Facilities." In *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 32, Architecture, Institutions and Change*, edited by Paul Hogben and Judith O'Callaghan, 319-330. Sydney: SAHANZ, 2015.

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Biculturalism in New Zealand Correctional Facilities

In New Zealand architecture, notions of biculturalism have been addressed in a slowly increasing manner over the past 30 years. But has architecture in New Zealand taken these notions seriously in institutions, such as correctional facilities, as well?

The introduction of the term biculturalism was first linked to New Zealand architecture during the 1970s. This was a period where the significance of Māori art and culture was becoming apparent in New Zealand. This was due largely in part to the migration of Māori from rural areas to the cities, prior to the 1980s, which also coincided with an overall increase in the Māori population.

Some bicultural ideas have been incorporated into New Zealand architecture, and this can be seen through notable examples such as John Scott's Futuna Chapel (1961) and the Māori Battalion Building (1964), however, biculturalism is only recently being seen in institutional architecture around New Zealand. Correctional facilities Ngawha (2005) and Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2007) by Stephenson & Turner have incorporated spatial and design qualities into their designs which are intended to rehabilitate inmates through directly relating to their cultures and beliefs to engage mental, physical and spiritual recovery.

This paper suggests that the marae, the traditional Māori meeting house (as one of the few stable remnants of Māori culture over the centuries), has had an effect on the development of bicultural notions in New Zealand prisons. Building on an historical overview of bicultural aspects over the last 150 years, this paper focuses on the recent prison design of Ngawha in Northland in order to trace how notions of biculturalism have been addressed, taking into account the importance of the marae for Māori culture.

By the time the first European settlers had made their first significant contact in New Zealand in 1769,¹ Māori had already lived here for more than 500 years.² Over this time Māori had developed a unique tribal culture based on their own beliefs and customs, known as *tikanga*. Collectivism formed the basis of this social structure; identity and value which was found in family and tribal connectedness, not so much in individual qualities or achievements.³ The most important aspect of *tikanga* is *whakapapa*, or genealogy. This is a perceived line of descent from the primordial parents Papatuanuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Skyfather), through their descendants (gods), all the way down to connections between individuals today. This provided Māori with a holistic approach to life, with no separation between the secular and spiritual in their culture, society or institutions.⁴ The concept of *whanaungatanga* (kinship) determined how one should act towards relatives and ancestors in order to maximise the welfare of the group.⁵ The principle of *utu*, balance or reciprocity, is a key dynamic in *tikanga* as it is needed to maintain equilibrium not only between all parts of the human world but also of the non-human world. When there was an imbalance in any aspect of life then redress for *utu* was sought. Social and legal control within *tikanga* was achieved through *tapu*, which means that a person, place or thing is dedicated to a specific purpose, and is off limits unless certain protocols are followed. This governs what one can and cannot do. *Mana* is an important concept which represents someone's or something's prestige, authority or reputation. Achievements in life can enhance one's *mana*, however offences against *tapu* can detract from it; this can be seen in traditional dispute resolution. In pre-colonial times disputes or offences were resolved between individuals or tribes through a process of restoration. There was no concept of imprisonment in Māori society at this time. Instead the aim was for the restoration of *mana* through the discussion between parties, offender and victim. Restoration of *mana* was generally achieved through *muru*, or compensation, which generally resulted in the dispossession of land or valuables. The overall aim of this method was the mending of relationships (kinship) and restoration of balance (*utu*). These conflicts were traditionally resolved on the *marae*, which in pre-colonial times, consisted of an open space in front of the chief's house. With its Polynesian origins, the *marae* was central to all Māori life and the focal point of every permanently inhabited village. It was the origin of all communal and social activities, where the dead were given farewell, the living were celebrated, children played and the elderly talked. The development of the meeting house as a dominant feature on the *marae* did not occur until post-colonial contact.

When Europeans arrived in New Zealand they brought their own set of social institutions. Based primarily on an anthropocentric worldview, a strong driver of mid-nineteenth-century society was capitalism. Of particular relevance for this paper is the fragmentation of certain institutions, giving them their own peculiar purpose and standards. This paper will address one such institution, the prison, which can be seen as a manifestation of the state's power, and will briefly sketch its development in New Zealand. This will be set against the concurrent development of the most significant Māori institution, the *marae*. Thus, the paper addresses how the *marae*'s holistic nature allows it to adapt to the particular context and needs of its people at all times. The paper will address the current problem Māori face, the

disproportionate imprisonment rates, and analyse how the marae's latest adaptation into the opposing institution of a prison is being used to heal its people who are inside.

Early prison development and its effect on the Māori population

Māori way of life went largely unaffected during the early colonisation of New Zealand by the British, after the initial signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. In fact during this time, even though the colonial legal process largely ignored *tikanga*, attempts were made to take Māori beliefs into account. This can be seen through the Crown's appointment of a Māori magistrate to oversee the administration of justice in Māori communities, as well as to recognise *utu* as a penalty for criminal offending.⁶ These customs are thought to have been used until the middle of the twentieth century when the urbanisation of Māori, and subsequent interaction with European society for the first time, meant many of these customs were lost to western ways of living.⁷

This acceptance of specific Māori ways of doing things could also be seen in the construction of the first prisons in New Zealand which were set up as early as 1838.⁸ The location of these first prisons in Okiato and Kororareka, now known as Russell, as well as additional de facto jails located in Akaroa (near Christchurch), Petone (near Wellington) and Hokianga (west coast of North Island) coincide with port locations where European immigrants first settled, with Russell being named New Zealand's first capital in 1840, after the signing of the treaty of Waitangi. One year later when the capital was shifted down to Auckland an additional lock up was opened there. These jails, like the early houses of Māori,⁹ were little more than wood, raupo and toetoe huts which were so insecure that prisoners had to be chained up much of the time so as to prevent them from escaping.¹⁰ The initial acceptance of Māori *tikanga* and methods of construction by the early colonial settlers however can be seen as a response from them to a new country and culture – no surprise given that with a population of only 2000 at the time, the settlers were significantly outnumbered by Maori.¹¹

Significant developments 1860-1960

European willingness to accept Māori *tikanga* did not last long and over the next century both cultures underwent contrasting social, cultural and economic developments. The initial change in sentiment can be seen as a direct response to the drastically increasing European immigrant population at the time, which by 1858 had surpassed that of the indigenous Māori.¹² This growing population led to the need to acquire new land on which to settle, eventually resulting in the New Zealand land wars. The subsequent pressures of land loss, alienation and social upheaval took their toll on Māori, and created the need for a building in which to debate land disputes and focus identity. This fostered the development of the modern marae which from this point on became central to Māori through providing a focal point for all spiritual, ancestral, chiefly and tribal values.¹³ The concurrent development of prisons based on English models was driven by the appointment of New Zealand's first Inspector General of Prisons, Arthur Hume, in 1880. Having worked as Deputy Governor at various English prisons, Hume was a disciplinarian and was immediately given the task of addressing the lawlessness occurring throughout the colony at the time.¹⁴ Hume initiated

the construction of Mt Eden prison in Auckland and of Mt Cook prison in Wellington in 1882 to replace the current overcrowded jails which, not fit for purpose, had fallen into disrepair. Both prisons clearly reflected the contemporary English prison architecture at the time with wings radiating out from central hubs, being influenced by the 'model prison' (Pentonville, London, 1840). These unmistakably gothic prisons could be seen as a symbol of growing Victorian control over New Zealand.

As a consequence of the New Zealand land wars the British confiscated the majority of the remaining fertile Māori land. Pushed back into the rural areas of New Zealand the Māori population plummeted to 42,000¹⁵, largely due to low immunity to newly introduced diseases and a lack of sanitary conditions in the rural areas. The turn of the twentieth century brought about a Māori renaissance as a result of the significant influence of Māori leaders such as Dr Maui Pomare and Dr Peter Buck (rural health reforms, 1900), Te Puea Herangi and Sir Apirana Ngata (Rotorua School of Māori Arts and Crafts School, 1926). During this period of Māori regeneration, prisons underwent a counter-development marked by the retirement of Hume in 1909. The previous system of severe punishment was replaced by a method of correctional training which would instead aim at reforming inmates, dubbed the 'new method' in 1909.¹⁶ The solution was seen in open institutions or prison farms. These promoted healthy physical labour in the countryside with the hope that it would reinstate morals and virtue back into the inmates. This short period was followed by a conservative approach in Corrections from 1925 onwards, largely since New Zealand's economy was crippled by the First World War leading to tighter control on prison spending.¹⁷ By 1936, the Māori population had spiked to 82,000.¹⁸ This was largely due to the introduction of western medicine, improved living conditions in rural areas, and the fact that Māori finally developed immunity to foreign diseases. This population growth meant that Māori could no longer economically support their people off the limited land they had left. This began the major trend of Māori moving to cities in search of work. The dramatic move from rural New Zealand, where they predominantly still lived by Māori *tikanga*, to the cities has resulted in the cultural, spiritual and physical dislocation of Māori.

Marae as a way out

The architectural response to the cultural dislocation caused by Māori migrating to cities was the introduction of urban marae. Urban marae reintroduced traditional protocols and provided the social and cultural needs with which urban Māori were sorely missing in the cities. The first traditional, kin-based marae was Te Puea marae in Mangere, Auckland. Built in 1965, Te Puea was built on Tainui tribal lands and was a full marae complex, including a carved meeting house, ablution block and dining hall. Even though under the control of Tainui tribes, the funding for the project came from not only Tainui tribal members, but also multiple other Māori organisations throughout Auckland. This pan-tribal cooperation meant that all tribes are entitled to use the marae, as long it is understood it is a Waikato marae.¹⁹ The first non-kin based marae was built in 1980 in the West Auckland suburb of Glen Eden. This was built by a non-tribal committee formed out of the large Māori population in West Auckland. John Waititi Memorial Marae was the first of its kind as it represented a marae run by Māori

for all Māori no matter the tribal affiliation. From the late 1980s onwards marae developed further in the form of tertiary or school marae.²⁰ Established on campuses of secondary and tertiary institutions, these facilities ranged between made-over pre-fabricated classrooms decorated with carvings, to purpose-built, fully decorated houses with their own courtyards and associated dining and cooking facilities.²¹ One example of this is Waipapa marae (1988) at Auckland University, designed by Ivan Mercep of Jasmad. The establishment of school marae helped to fulfil the need for the maintenance of culture, assertion of identity and resistance to assimilation.

While this development was positive, the Department of Justice came to realise by the 1960s that New Zealand had a 'Māori Crime Problem'²² which they felt would only increase due to urbanisation. The government had seen the Māori prison population grow from around two percent in the nineteenth century, rising to 4.6 per cent in 1918, then 11 per cent in 1936. During the Second World War, and the resultant urban drift, Māori receptions almost doubled to 21 per cent by 1945 before jumping again to 25 per cent in 1960. Against this development the effectiveness of current and past correctional treatment was coming into question not only in New Zealand, but worldwide.²³ This happened on the back of multiple failed programmes and treatments which dealt with all inmates with a universal approach, not taking into account their wide diversity in terms of age, criminal experience, intelligence, education, mental stability, vocational training and social background.²⁴ However, from the early 1970s onwards, there was some evidence that Māori cultural needs were being incorporated into correctional practice.²⁵ Cultural groups were started in the hope that reintroducing Māori to tikanga would restore their sense of mana and thus reduce offending.²⁶ Such a development was the more important as the Māori prison population had now reached 40 per cent of the entire prison population. During the early 1980s prison-related functions such as ceremonies, conferences or prison openings took on a predominantly Māori focus, including marae based protocols.²⁷ This was taken further with the incorporation of three approaches to counselling and healing. The first approach saw an increased utilisation of traditional healing techniques alongside mainstream services, the second was a bicultural approach which uses a combination of both mainstream services and Māori values and customary practices, and the third was the use of purely Māori centred techniques.²⁸ These techniques could not have come at a better time as the Māori prison muster had now grown to its current rate of 50 per cent of the overall prison muster. These changes followed a general trend within New Zealand towards a bicultural nation which was due to numerous public protests and political movements as well as to the Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975.²⁹ The increasing use of culturally appropriate services continued through the 1990s, first with the introduction of a 'restorative justice' model for juveniles in 1989 which, just like the pre-colonial Māori, focussed on bringing the offender and victim together to confront the consequences of their actions. This was then supplemented by the establishment of five Māori focus groups in current prisons, with the first one opening in 1997 at Mangaroa Prison in Hawkes Bay, and subsequent groups at Rimutaka (1999), New Plymouth (2000); before being moved to Wanganui in 2002, Waikeria Prison (2001) and Tongariro/Rangipo (2002).³⁰

Closing the gap

In 1999 the Labour party won the general election under the banner 'Closing the Gaps', which promised to reduce inequalities between Māori and Pakeha New Zealanders. This was reiterated in their annual report, stating: "All of Corrections mainstream activities have been, or will be, reviewed in terms of their relevance and effectiveness for Māori and Pacific peoples."³¹ At this time there were plans for the development of three regional prisons, in Northland, Auckland and Otago, with the hopes that by locating inmates near their family and support structures there would be a higher chance of rehabilitation and reintegration on release. These plans were put on hold immediately with Matt Robson, new Minister of Corrections, believing that by giving priority to rehabilitation programs and reducing social inequalities there would be no need for the new facilities.³² However, this strategy failed, and as predicted when he took office the prison musters grew.³³ Hardened public attitudes towards crime, caused by a number of high profiled violent crimes, resulted in the Sentencing Act 2002 and Parole Act 2002 which ultimately increased the likelihood of a prison sentence. With this only going to increase the prison musters further the regional prisons development program was reactivated. The situation here is reminiscent of earlier reform movements in the early 1900s which attempted to deliver a new regime of rehabilitation within the inappropriate Victorian prisons. This reinforces the fact that architecture has an important role to play in supporting the rehabilitation regimes and cultures within prisons, if there is any hope in addressing the growing prison population.

Despite all good intentions of respect and inclusion before, the first example of biculturalism in the design of a New Zealand Correctional Facility came as late as 2005. It is the Northland Region Corrections Facility, otherwise known as Ngawha Prison, designed by the New Zealand office of Stephenson & Turner. The first new facility to be built on a 'greenfield' site, Ngawha Prison was opened in 2005 just outside of Kaikohe, in rural Northland. The location of the prison was specifically chosen so as to locate inmates, who are predominantly Māori (80 per cent of the Ngawha Prison population), close to their families and tribal land so as to assist in their rehabilitation. Before construction could start numerous Hui (discussions) were held with the local iwi Ngati Rangi, who had mana whenua and kaitiaki status (guardianship) over the land, to address any concerns about the prison. Some locals were unhappy with the prison's location on a tapu site, others that the prison was built at all. Not all felt this way, and many supported the construction of the new prison, seeing the potential benefits of the rehabilitation of their people inside, as well as the creation of stable long term jobs within the wider community outside.³⁴ As a result of successful discussions a Memorandum of Partnership was signed between the Ngati Rangi and the Crown, giving them on-going input into the operation of the facilities through provision of employment, operation of programmes by locals and ongoing cultural support and advice.³⁵ Ngati Rangi, as well as cultural design advisors Mike Barns and Rewi Thompson, had a significant influence on the design of Ngawha Prison ensuring that the scheme was culturally responsive and encouraged rehabilitation through the introduction of Māori spatial and design qualities.

Ngawha Prison is situated on a 190 hectare section of farmland next to the well-known

Ngawha hot springs. Taking up only 17 hectares of the 190 hectare site, the prison is located in a valley on a terraced site. The most distinctive feature of this landscape is Ngawha stream, which meanders through the middle of the prison's secure area. The Department of Corrections' initial intention was to fill in the stream and level the whole site into "one big flat area", like a traditional prison.³⁶ This prompted the locals' original protest since it was believed that their tupuna (ancestor), a taniwha, lived in the stream. But a concept design report provided by Mike Barns and Rewi Thompson during the initial design phase prevented the filling in of the stream. In their report, Barns and Thompson emphasised the importance of local land and water forms, suggesting that "any intervention or incisions (ta moko) to the site be minimal".³⁷ This references the importance of whanaungatanga (kinship), in that any earthwork or altering of the landscape should be done with sensitivity and respect so as to not harm the integrity of Papatuanuku. Ngati Rangī supported this approach, which resulted in the retention of the site's sloping terraces and made Ngawha into what is thought to be the first example of a prison anywhere to have a stream running through it. The stream, rather than simply being a natural feature within the prison, kept only out of necessity, became the most important element in both the physical and cultural planning of the site. Thompson refers to the stream as the "spiritual backbone of the prison, which facilitates spiritual connections to the land and enhances the spiritual recovery and rehabilitation of the inmates".³⁸



Fig. 1 Ariel view of Ngawha Prison emphasising Ngawha stream as the focal point (spine) of the prison. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Stephenson & Turner.

Barns and Thompson's report also warned against the physical manifestation of enclosure, and the effects such an environment would have on Māori inmates. Thompson reasoned that "even if an inmate's movements are restricted, an outlook to the wider world can engage mental, physical and spiritual recovery".³⁹ As a result the report suggested that an open plan layout with a village (kāinga) type arrangement of buildings be used. This was aligned with Stephenson & Turner's plan for an open institution based on the worldwide accepted 'campus model' of prisons.⁴⁰ The resultant layout was a uniquely New Zealand interpretation of the 'campus model' which incorporated the fundamental principles of the marae's spiritual and spatial layout. The traditional spatial layout of a marae is that of the gateway, marae atea (open space in front of the meeting house) and meeting house. This can be seen

literally translated into the spatial layout of Ngawha Prison through the gatehouse (gateway), a pathway which cuts through the middle of the site creating an open space (atea), and the accommodation blocks (whare) which are scattered around facing towards the open space. The orientation of the prison to the east reinforces its marae influence as this is the predominant orientation of a marae. This then creates an outlook onto the open space, the marae atea, which was seen as a crucial part of the prison's design, creating a connection back to the land which is seen as their ancestor.⁴¹



Fig. 2 Buildings facing out onto the atea (open space) and stream. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Stephenson & Turner.

To maintain this sense of openness Barns and Thompson suggested the perimeter security wall to be a transparent fence, allowing a view through to the outside world. However, due to security concerns, linked to overseas examples where bulldozers had ran through fences, the decision was made to use a concrete wall. And this was not just to prevent inmates from breaking out. Curiously, since the inmates were located near their home and family – likely also located close to where the offences had occurred – there were concerns that people who were affected by the offence would break in to retaliate. Thus the perimeter wall was made equally for the purpose of keeping people out, as for keeping people in.⁴² This made the elevated site all the more important as it allowed inmates to maintain visual connection over to the surrounding landscape and connect with their specific maunga (mountains), over the top of the wall.

The accommodation blocks at Ngawha were conceived based on the Māori focus units at Mangaroa Prison, in the Hawkes Bay. Even though these units were not purpose-built to support Māori protocols or values (the Department of Justice was unwilling at the time to build new facilities for these initiatives⁴³), they had certain design features relevant to Māori. The single level, pre-fabricated units were based on an internally focused courtyard model, which was seen as reflecting a community similar to that of a traditional kāinga (village). It enabled the inmates to see and relate to each other as part of a whole and provided a space in which to engage with each other more readily. This atea-like space emphasised physical activity, through the incorporation of a basketball court, and provided a place to come together for performances like kapa haka, and other such activities. Thompson saw

this layout as also heavily reflecting the spatial properties of a marae, in that the inmates were able to relate to the idea of open space (courtyard/atea), large veranda (paepae), cell (whare), and the way in which this connected to the wider cultural landscape.

However, the eventual form of the accommodation blocks at Ngawha, reminiscent of handcuffs, did not appeal to Rewi Thompson.⁴⁴ An amalgamation of two of the courtyard units discussed above, the Ngawha blocks were clearly influenced by the popular ‘new generation’ model of accommodation block used worldwide. Commonly, such blocks consisted of two units joined by a connecting building in the form of a ‘bow-tie’,⁴⁵ to allow for efficient surveillance and management of the two blocks from one position. This efficiency, primarily in terms of cost, was the main reason for the joining and enclosing of the courtyard blocks with a central management block. Thompson felt that this solution resulted in the removal of a key feature from the Māori focus units, the wire screening on the one side. This allowed inmates to view out into the wider landscape and promoted a sense of openness rather than imprisonment. To ensure that a sense of openness and connection to landscape was maintained the blocks were terraced on the western slope, allowing an inmate within the courtyard to view out over the units and connect to the wider landscape. The perimeter wall, which in traditional prisons reinforces the idea of separation and enclosure, seems to disappear.



Fig. 3 Interior courtyard of one of the accommodation blocks. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Stephenson & Turner.

Apart from the joining of the two pods this model was similar to that of the Māori focus units with cells wrapping around and facing inwards into a central communal space. The key differences, however, are seen through the opening up of the interior communal space to the sky and surrounding cultural landscape at Ngawha, and the incorporation of a porch to reference and recreate the ancient Māori model of the marae’s spatial succession – interior, porch and marae atea. The sequence of spatial arrangements was seen as fundamental in order to relate to the Māori inmates.⁴⁶ However, Thompson also saw the potential that this sequence of private (interior), semi-private (porch) and public (open space) could relate to other ethnicities as well. He argued that this sequence was a universal model, evident in the architecture of many different ethnicities so thus being appropriate for blocks elsewhere.⁴⁷

This thought can be seen in the choice to use the same overall layout and accommodation block at Springhill Corrections Facility, built two years later south of Auckland near Huntly. Even though catering for a wider range of demographics, particularly Polynesian, the same design and spatial principles were applied.

The prison incorporates a cultural building or *whare hui*, which is used not only by community groups but also doubles as a spiritual space for non-denominational gatherings. The building, which essentially performs the function of a *marae*, cannot be called one. Since it personifies or embodies ancestors, heritage, tradition, values and culture, any placement of a *whare nui* on a *marae* within the walls of a prison would essentially mean the imprisonment of ones ancestors and hence would be perceived as a crime. However there is no reason why cultural values and traditions could not be taught there, including traditional Māori *whakairo* (carving). As a solution to this problem, the *whare* abides by Māori protocols in its orientation, space and relationship. Traditionally, *whare nui* were decorated with *whakairo* (carvings) of their ancestor's stories and journeys, however because this building cannot be classified as an ancestral house the interior was left bare. Instead inmates produced *whakairo*, paintings and woven *tukutuku* panels embodying their own personal journeys.



Fig. 4 Traditional marae spatial succession of gateway, atea and whare (*whare hui*), recreating the traditional procession onto a *marae* for formal occasions. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Stephenson & Turner.

Conclusion

The underlying penal principle of the prison is that of accepting personal responsibility for one's offence and for one's rehabilitation. This is expressed in the built form, first, through providing each occupant with their own internal 'whare' (cell) containing ablutions, where they can develop their own personal sense of *rangatiratanga* (sovereignty)⁴⁸, and then later in their rehabilitation with the provision of self-care units, which, as Barns and Thompson put it, require the inmates to be their own chiefs.⁴⁹ The real success of Ngawha goes further: it lies in the willingness of the Department of Corrections to not only take Māori *tikanga* seriously, but to allow them to become significant design drivers. Through the sensitive adaptation of existing prison models, Ngawha has taken advantage of the incorporation of traditional Māori *tikanga* and spatial principles into its built form in an attempt to rehabilitate the local Māori inmates. Obviously the design process necessitated negotiations and

compromises on both sides, due to the contrasting nature of both institutions: the marae (openness, freedom, connections to land and family) and the prison (control, surveillance, separation from outside world).

Since the colonisation of New Zealand, Māori have been adversely affected through the loss of land, assimilation techniques from the government, depopulation, and loss of *tikanga* through migration to cities; however the one Māori institution which has managed to survive is the marae. Through successive events, the marae has adapted to the specific needs of its people at the time, all the while retaining a sense of Māori customs and identity against the ongoing pressures from the dominant European society and culture. In every instance it has provided a statement of identity and *turangawaewae*, or place to stand, where every Māori can feel welcomed and comfortable. And this is evident in its latest adaptation of the marae into correctional facilities. With consideration of specific spatial, cultural and spiritual qualities of the marae, these correctional facilities attempt to reintroduce Māori to *tikanga* through all aspects of its design and operation in the hope of reintroducing a sense of identity and *mana* back into the inmates.

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